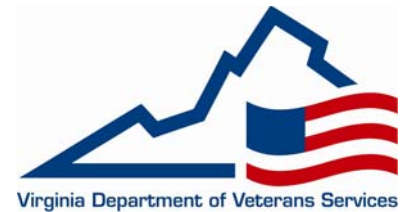


The Virginia Department of Veterans Services



900 East Main Street • Richmond, VA 23219 • www.virginiaforveterans.com

News Update

January 2009

2009 legislative objectives

The following legislative objectives for 2009 were adopted by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) on August 13, 2008. These are the top legislative objectives of the 23 veterans service organizations represented on the JLC. Supporting position papers are posted on the DVS website, www.VirginiaforVeterans.com.

1. Automated System for the Electronic Preparation of Veterans' Disability Claims:

The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly direct that *"subject to the availability of sufficient funds, the Department of Veterans Services shall ... develop and deploy an automated system for the electronic preparation of veterans' disability claims."*

2. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children: The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly enact HB 1727 (2009), *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children*.

3. Burial Vaults for Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries: The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly appropriate funds so that burial vaults may be provided at no cost at Virginia state veterans cemeteries.

4. Military Family Relief Fund: The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation such that benefits paid from the Military Family Relief Fund shall be nontaxable.

5. Real Estate Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans: The JLC recommends that Governor and General Assembly pass legislation to amend the Virginia Constitution that would require

local governments to grant real estate tax exemptions for 100% disabled veterans without regard to means testing.

6. Homeless Veterans Study: The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly fund a study to examine the current level of services provided to homeless veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the need for and cost of additional services.



Wreaths placed on all headstones at Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery

For the first time, evergreen wreaths were placed on all headstones at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk as part of the national Wreaths Across America observance. The wreaths were laid on December 13, 2008. The tradition of laying wreaths began in 1992 when the Worcester Wreath Company donated wreaths for the headstones of fallen heroes in Arlington National Cemetery. Although many veterans cemeteries participate in the annual Wreaths Across America observance, very few, other than Arlington, are able to place wreaths at every gravesite.

Jeanne Banks, along with the Tidewater Tidal WAVES, lead a group of volunteers in raising more than \$8,000 to purchase the 1,700 wreaths needed. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, members of the Patriot

Guard Riders, and active duty service members began placing wreaths on the headstones early the morning of the 13th.

The Civil Air Patrol partners with Wreaths Across America, a nonprofit organization to remember, honor, and teach about the service and sacrifices of our nation's veterans. Active duty service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and U. S. Coast Guard also participated in the ceremony at the Horton Cemetery.

New members join Veterans Services Foundation

Seven new members have joined the Veterans Services Foundation, effective July 1, 2008. These new members were added to the Foundation following legislation passed by the 2008 General Assembly.

Leo C. Waldrup, Jr., USN (Ret) was first elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1991 and served until 2007. During his tenure, he served as Chairman of the House Republican Caucus; Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation; and as a member of the Appropriations, Rules, and Joint Rules Committees. He has served as Director of Finance and Development for Tidewater Consultants, Inc.; Commissioner, Virginia Beach Economic Development Authority; and Commissioner, Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District. He is currently self-employed as a financial analyst.

William Lechler founded and operates William Lechler & Company, Ltd., a management consulting and business brokerage firm. He is also owner and Director of Amark Corporation, an industrial marine contactor. In 2006, he formed Sea Knight, LLC and serves as its chief executive. Mr. Lechler served two appointed terms on the Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University, chairing the Finance and Administrative Committee. He has served on numerous international trade missions on behalf of the Commonwealth. He served two years in the U.S. Army.

David N. Richardson is a business and research industry leader with expertise in behavioral and opinion research applications to communications strategy. His work is most often used to solve critical business and policy questions. He is a founding partner of Artemis Strategy Group, a research-based communications strategy firm created in 2006. Prior to starting Artemis, Mr. Richardson was Group President at Harris Interactive, where he led the government policy, consumer and financial and government groups.

Don Hall is President and CEO of the Virginia Automobile Dealers Association as well as Chief Executive Officer of its subsidiary corporations, including Virginia Automobile Dealers Services, Inc., the VADA Group Self-Insurance Association, the VADA Education Foundation, the Virginia Automobile and Truck Dealers PAC, and the Greater Richmond New Car Dealers Association. Mr. Hall was a founding gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia Career Education Foundation. In 2004, he was appointed by the General Assembly to a joint subcommittee to study conflicts of interests and lobbyist disclosure filings. He served four years on active duty as a Marine noncommissioned officer.

Meade A. Spotts, USA Reserves (Ret) is President of Spotts Fain PC, a Virginia law firm focused on advising, counseling, and representing businesses in transactional and litigation matters since 1988. He is past Chairman of the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia and is an experienced fundraiser. He has been named in the business law real estate as well as the lobbying and regulatory category of the Legal Elite list published annually by *Virginia Business*.

Robert A. Archer, USA Reserves (Ret) serves as President of the Blue Ridge Beverage Company. He was formerly General Manager and Vice President of this family-owned business. He is a former board member and officer of the Roanoke Valley Visitors and Convention Bureau and the Blue Ridge Health Care Coalition. He served as a member and Chair of Virginia's Small Business Advisory Board and as a member of Virginia's Small Business Financing Authority Board. He has been President of Virginia Beer Wholesalers Association as well as a member

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of the Board of Directors for the National Beer Wholesalers Association and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce.

Randall L. West, USMC (Ret) is currently the President and CEO of Robison International, Inc. where he serves as a consultant and advisor to industry, DoD, and Congress, primarily on national security and policy. He serves on the Board of

Directors for Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Armed Forces Foundation, and the National Museum of Military History. He is a member of the White House Commission on Remembrance. Prior to joining Robison International, he served on the George W. Bush Presidential Transition Team as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Budget, and Military Matters.

Resources

Be sure to check out these links.

Suicide Prevention Hotline

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/

If you or someone you know may be suicidal, call **now** for help: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). Press 1. Your call is free and confidential.

National Resource Directory

www.nationalresourcedirectory.org

The directory is a web-based network of care coordinators, providers and support partners with resources for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families, families of the fallen, and those who support them.

Military Handbooks

www.militaryhandbooks.com

Here's the very best information available about pay, benefits, retirement planning, education benefits, career decisions, much more in a series of straightforward, easy-to-understand handbooks - for FREE!

Veterans Survival Guide

www.veteransforamerica.org/survival-guide/survival-guide-download/

This roadmap and reference manual details the benefits, assistance and resources available as well as the step-by-step directions for navigating the bureaucracies that serve our troops and veterans.

2-1-1

www.211.org

Need help but don't know where to turn? Call 2-1-1 or visit the website. This is an easy way to find the help you need in your community.

Virginia Easy Access

www.easyaccess.virginia.gov/

Virginia Easy Access provides resources and support for seniors and adults with disabilities.

NewWell Fund

www.newwellfund.org

The NewWell Fund, a Commonwealth of Virginia State Authority, helps Virginians with disabilities obtain assistive technology, home modifications, or telework business equipment through low interest loans. Any Virginia resident with a disability or a caregiver of a person of any age with a disability can apply.

Granting Freedom Program

www.vhda.com/vhda.com/Templates/a.asp?VHDA_COM_PAGE_NA

The Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) offers this grant program that pays for modifications to make living spaces more accessible for servicemen or women who sustained injury

Serving those who served.

[ME=GrantingFreedom](#)



during service in a combat theatre of operations.

If you don't have this handy brochure in your wallet, email us (general.info@dvs.virginia.gov) your name and address and we'll drop one in the mail to you. It gives a synopsis of state and VA benefits as well as contact information for all DVS offices. Or check us out at www.virginiaforveterans.com.

About Us

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services operates 21 benefit services offices where representatives help veterans and their family members file claims for federal and state veterans benefits. The agency also certifies that post-secondary educational institutions meet G.I. Bill funding and eligibility requirements, enabling veterans and family members to pursue educational opportunities. DVS operates two veterans long-term care facilities. The Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) in Roanoke is a 240-bed facility offering skilled nursing, domiciliary, and Alzheimer's/dementia care for veterans. The 160-bed Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center is located in Richmond and provides skilled nursing and Alzheimer's/dementia care. The agency operates two veterans cemeteries: the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk. A third state-operated veterans cemetery in Dublin is in the early stages of development.

Have a question? Email us at general.info@dvs.virginia.gov.